

[Green light for Holyrood probe into Salmond-Sturgeon row](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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15 Jan 2019



The Scottish Parliament is to launch an inquiry into the handling of, and fall-out from, sexual harassment complaints against former First Minister Alex Salmond.

MSPs on the Holyrood bureau today agreed that the probe would go ahead, following calls for an investigation by the Scottish Conservatives last week.

The parliamentary bureau will meet in coming weeks to discuss membership of the special committee which will be set up to carry out the inquiry, and its specific remit.

It is understood the committee will examine the meetings between Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond and the process used by the civil service in handling the complaints.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“I’m pleased that the parliamentary bureau has decided today to back the Scottish Conservative proposal for a Holyrood inquiry into this affair.

“An investigation has been botched, two complainants have been let down, and hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers’ money has been wasted.

“These are clearly matters for the Scottish Parliament to investigate, and the inquiry must be able to examine what went wrong and why this was allowed to happen.

“The setting up of the inquiry does not mean that legitimate questions cannot be asked – or answered – in the short term.

“For example, it is reported today that the First Minister’s chief of staff told a former colleague of Mr Salmond in March of last year that she ‘suspected’ an inquiry was on-going.

“Why was she speaking about this inquiry to third parties? Did she tell Nicola Sturgeon of her suspicions too? Or are we really to believe that Ms Sturgeon’s own chief of staff kept this from her?

“This scandal cannot be swept under the carpet. Parliament must, and now

will, get the chance to probe this matter fully, learn lessons, and ensure it can never happen again.”